

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safe Travels: State Partnerships Drive Importance to Secure Your Load

NEW YORK – Nationwide support from 46 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands is helping drive home the importance of drivers securing their load. This year's annual Secure Your Load Day June 6 is intended to raise awareness of the dangers of unsecured loads and road debris. The national awareness day was founded by Robin Abel, whose vow to educate the public on the importance of load securement is gaining significant traction. Some states are even beginning to employ policy to hold those with unsecured loads that cause damage or injuries criminally liable.

More than 200,000 crashes in the past four years were caused by road debris, according to a recent [study](#) by the AAA Foundation for Safety. The study also showed that road debris resulted in approximately 39,000 injuries and 500 deaths between 2011 and 2014. As a nation, we spend up to \$11.5 billion on litter, 20 to 40 percent of which is litter from unsecured loads.

Abel, a Seattle, Wash. resident, made it her mission to fight this senseless and avoidable danger after her daughter was catastrophically injured by an unsecured load. Channeling her grief into action, Abel started a Secure Your Load movement in 2004 to raise awareness and even change the laws. In the past 14 years, her steadfast work has created real change, like convincing then-President Obama and Congress to include load-securing recommendations in the Fast Act, a federal transportation funding bill passed in Dec. 2015.

"The states are enthusiastically embracing this safety message. These safety professionals and law enforcement have gone out of their way to participate in Secure Your Load Day on June 6 — and I am so grateful for their support," Abel said.

"We put on our seatbelts and fasten our children in car seats so why is it that we think it's OK to leave anything loose in the bed of our trucks and risk endangering others on the road? A 20-pound object at 55 MPH has a force of 1,000 pounds at impact."

Other major victories include support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and added language about securing loads in the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) model manual for all non-commercial drivers nationwide.

“Unsecured loads and road debris are not freak accidents but frequent incidents and most are preventable with just a few minutes of time and a few dollars in equipment,” Abel said. “Weight is not a form of load securement and neither is the cram technique. All items need to be securely fastened to the vehicle.”

The good news is that awareness continues to fuel policy. In recent days, Alaska became the latest state to pass a load securement bill. Unfortunately, the law comes too late for Alaska resident Kelly Ann Roy, who was almost killed when someone lost their unsecured load in front of her car while she was driving to work.

“Having a traumatic brain injury has drastically changed my life. I fight every day to get better,” said Ray “That driver is responsible for what happened to me. His actions ripped away my ability to be a person — to walk, have a conversation, even to hold someone’s hand or hug them. It’s taken years to get back the simplest of things that are simple yet so important.

“The driver could have spent five minutes to make sure his load was secured but he didn’t. He didn’t even try and that five minutes not spent I have paid for with the rest of my life,” Roy added.

Despite her injuries, Kelly desperately wanted to make the roads safer for others and reached out to Abel for help in her home state, where the Anchorage Waste Facility issued upwards of 1,100 fines for unsecured loads in 2017 alone.

Despite the gains, there’s still a lot more work to be done. Abel would like to see an increase in highway safety education, programs at waste facilities, an emphasis on patrols, more Department of Transportation cameras on freeways, every states’ driver guides updated with AAMVA model language, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Agency (FMCSA) to include load securement knowledge and skills in their 2020 Early Driving Training.

On June 6, in honor of those whose lives have been impacted or taken by unsecured loads and road debris and in an effort to make load-securing a standard practice, Abel urges everyone to share and heed this urgent traffic safety message. This simple precaution will save lives.

Here’s how Abel recommends to properly secure your load in five easy steps:

1. Tie down load with rope, netting or straps
2. Tie large objects directly to the vehicle or trailer
3. Cover the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting
4. Don’t overload the vehicle
5. Always double check load to make sure a load is secure

“Secure your load as if everyone you love is driving in the car behind you,” Abel said.

For more information, go to www.secureyourload.com.